

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 19, No. 6

June 1951

Whole No. 225

19TH CENTURY PEEP-SHOW

By Fred T. Singleton

I

We never write the word Peep without thinking of Frank Jay, the never-tiring peeper behind the veil fogging the history of nineteenth-century popular fiction, British make. His gentle spirit must still haunt the reading-room of the British Museum. He died suddenly one February morning in 1934 while at breakfast. In a letter received from his wife, written in November of that year just before she sailed to join her daughter in Indianapolis, she said "He had been poorly for about three months but we never dreamed the end was so near. I still have a great number of his books but not the kind you like." Mr. Jay had gradually sold his collection of the popular penny marvels, but not because he no longer loved them. Our very fine set of the first six yearly volumes of the large-size Reynolds' Miscellany was purchased from him, and his name is modestly stamped on their inside front covers. He sold many items to the New York Public Library where they can still be seen, and a most interesting volume of one hundred all different British boys' papers to the Grand Rapids Public Library. American fans who possess clippings of the many contributions and letters he sent to newspapers and periodicals have original data based on painstaking personal research. His final and most valuable writings were contained in the noteworthy series he contributed to Spare Moments in 1918-1919 under the general heading of Peeps Into the Past.

Every generation of boys seems to have the idea that cheap publications for their own special consumption turned up for the first time in their own day. All they know is what they see in the periodical displays. For this writer boys' nickel and dime print-wonders made their first appearance in this universe during the 1880-1890 decade. For the next crop of kids maybe the Frank Merriwell Tip Tops started the nickel print-ball rolling, or the Tousey Pluck and Luck reprints with their colored covers. Little did we innocents know that way back in the 1850's the same sort of stuff, maybe a bit slower and more stogy, was kicking back ready money for publishers. In the middle 1850's that "world-renowned and unrivaled gem of American journalism, the peerless" New York Mercury, already a bit gray about the temples, was a hot fiction sheet for newsmen and periodical dealers, with the newer and later more famous New York Ledger crowding it with serials by the great Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., who had just been wooed away from the Boston-published Flag of Our Union with some of publisher Robert Bonner's gold. And alluringly-titled novels and novelettes were stacked up alongside these big newspaper-size story papers at all prices from four cents up. They didn't seem to have nickels in those days. And in that decade, too, the New York Weekly,

the real gem of all the big story papers, in our opinion, began building the still alive and kicking publishing house of Street & Smith.

II

Charles H. Austin, one of the rugged pioneers of novel and storypaper collecting, made a romantic and picturesque figure in his Philadelphia candy store, surrounded by stand-out specimens of old-time lurid literature. He got a lot of publicity in the Philadelphia papers and in consequence received many letters from folk genuinely interested as well as from the merely curious. In a package of odds and ends we received from him shortly before his death were a number of these inquiries, and one of them in particular got under our skin, never very thick at best. It documents convincingly how widespread is the lure of the old pamphlet thrillers for both sexes, all ages. "May I ask you," it runs, "if you have any dime novels of incredibly formal girls? I have always hoped to read one, as my father who passed away thirty years ago used to read them. I often tried to get a peek at them but he would say 'No, no, not for little girls to read.' Now, a widow of forty-five, I think I am old enough to read them. What do you think? It would be the thrill of a lifetime to read one. Please do not laugh when you read this. Kindly let me know if you have any and what you ask for them. I see your picture and books in the newspaper. I would be tickled pink to hear from you." Well, we do not know about the girls in the old-time novels we read being so formal, but we do remember that they were decent, dead-shots, and loyal to the death. And we hope that Charlie sent that lady a tall hero-heroine tale with enough thrilling situations in it to curl her hair.

Austin was a walking encyclopedia on the popular literature of the nineteenth century. Since typing the foregoing paragraph we have continued to work through our box of his oddments, and cannot resist setting down here a few of the short jerky remarks contained in a letter from him dated May 17, 1944. Referring to another unique Philadelphia character in the novel universe, Wm. J. Benners, he writes "Don't forget that he was a real dime-novel collector—one who really collects. I never knew him to sell anything once he got his hands on it." Other short graphic comments in this letter: "I read nearly all of Charles Garvice's stories forty-five years ago. Benners said *Just A Girl* and *Paid For* were the best ones. Capt. Fred Whittaker as a writer was in a class by himself—splendid. For wickedness I don't think I ever read anything to beat Philip S. Warne's No. 1030 *Beadle's Dime Library*, *The Creole Cousins*. Whittaker wrote the No. 1 *Beadle's Dime* called *Gentleman Sam's Sister*. Three good Col. Prentiss Ingraham titles in the *Dime Library* were *Molock the Money Lender*, *The Three Millionaires*, and *Jule the Jewess*. Ran across a *Brookside Library* title the other day in a Philadelphia bookstore, Kate Claxton's *The Two Orphans*—the Brooklyn Theater fire, 1876

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or 1877. It was so dusty I didn't buy it. It was in a shop at 908 Filbert Street. I guess the guy would want a quarter for it. Also in same place saw nice copy Frank A. Munsey's Derringforth. I think Munsey wrote it himself. I read it forty years ago and it was fine." We have not checked the library numbers, titles, and dates given here in these snappy comments. They are just as Charlie wrote them.

FOLLOWING THE HORSES WITHOUT A SHOVEL

or

Nameless Joe Rides Again

So me lads, here we go again. In my last effusion I dwelt upon my misadventures on an auto trip between N. Y. and San Francisco, an auto race that was called the N. Y. to Paris Race. Therein I mentioned how I loused up the trip so that instead of getting to Paris as the car did, Frisco was my stopping place.

Let's go on from there, if you're willing to go along, if not then just read the ads Ralph has set for you to browse over.

Six nights and five days on a train going home was nothing to go haywire about, but the steam roller wound up in N. Y. and then for the big reception of the boy hero who had returned with tales galore while plowing through the wild west.

A few days back in N. Y. and a wire arrived from Chas. E. Van Loan the then prominent sports writer who was with us between Cheyenne and Ogden, Utah, for the Denver Post, asking would I accept a job on the Post with my trusty dusty camera. Would I? Wired back sold my camera, but if camera is supplied will hop the next train. Next day the reply. Come on out, camera supplied and twenty-five a week. In those days, twenty-five bucks was some coconuts. Bidding Momma another tearful good-bye was agin on my way West, stopping off at Albany to see my brother who was playing a week's engagement at one of the Orpheum houses. I saw the show and added my applause to ten other guys, and brother couldn't understand why only six applauded, he said, I paid for ten.

Anyway let's get on with the story, this is about horses, and you fellows know what a big part they played in your old dime novels, you know, running away with beautiful maidens, which always was a sure fire bit of excitement for the author to hand his readers.

I arrive in Denver, all full of dust and everything and was greeted at the station by my good friend Van. That is he was my good friend—mostly, but more about him later.

The next morning, bright and early I presented my noble body before ye City Editor, and Van took me around to a camera shop, paid two hundred bucks for an outfit, just like that and I was ready for action. My very first assignment nearly cost me some busted bones, or my precious life, but being a tenderfoot who didn't know his way around so good, here's what happened.

Charlie, he said, using my maiden name, I want you to go right out to the stock yards, they have a small herd of Buffalo that is being shipped to an Indian Reservation up in the Dakotas, and I want some good shots, you know what to take, good close ups of some good looking heads, and a few general shots. Why the animals were in Denver, or for what purpose I forget it's so long ago, but there they were.

Without a thought, I hopped a fence and started shooting. Wow. All of a sudden I heard a yell from some palooka, but paid no attention, too busy with the camera. Next thing I knew a cowpuncher also hopped the fence, and believe it or not, threw me camera and all right back over the fence.

How the heck was a greenhorn tenderfoot like me to know these animals

were dangerous? Fortunately camera and bones escaped uninjured, but my feelings were quite ruffled. After I learned what might have happened there was no ill feeling towards my rescuer. Anyway I did have some good shots of heads, and then from a safe distance got the general material. The editor laughed when I told him what happened, and mention of the event was used along with the captions. My experience as a newspaper photographer always was to get the stuff and look for trouble afterwards, if any.

Now we come to the horses. A few days following my first assignment there was to be a six hundred mile horse race. And to cover the race, I was the one to go. We had one other man who took pictures on the Post, but they wanted him on other assignments. That I was selected did not set so well on his pouch, but he had to follow orders.

Covering this race from Evanston, Wyo., to Denver, was so long ago, that I sent a request to the Denver Public Library asking them if they had any details on this event. Of course I remembered the race, but being so long ago, many details slipped my mind. The library came through nobly, telling me an article had been used in the August edition of a magazine called *World Today*. I tried to find a copy in the big N. Y. City Library, but all they had was a magazine of the same name, but published in England.

However from what I remember and the material the library supplied, here is the gist.

It was called the Rocky Mt. Endurance Race. The Post sponsored it, inviting horses from all over the West to participate. Then entrants had to pass a certain test and only twenty-five passed. Any who came to Denver would at the Post's expense be transported to Evanston, from there they were on their own. A considerable sum of gold was the prize, how much is not mentioned, but it must have been worth while.

The object of the race was to discover the value of the broncho, both to horse breeders and to Government officials of the cavalry branch of the Army Service. Several horses of good blood were entered, but not one ever finished, that is of the six that finished.

The horses ranged in weight from 850 pounds, to about 1,075. The total weight carried by them, including rider, saddle and all equipment. Horses were checked periodically along the route by veterinarians.

The course of the race was along the old Overland Trail which is now used by the Western Pacific R. R. So if you look at your map, you will find it extends clear across the state of Wyoming and down into Colorado.

You now have why it was run, how many horses started and so let's get back to Denver before the race. A train with cars for the horses and newspaper staff left Denver May 26th, 1908, for Evanston. Three reporters, ten cowpunchers and myself. The photographer left behind photoed us all at the station, I still have a print of us lined up before the train.

En route to Evanston on the train there was plenty doing. Card games and the usual wrangling when a poor loser lost his shirt. No gun play such as you read about in your dime novels, but not far from it as I remember.

Late that night we arrived in Evanston and the following two days was devoted to a small sized Frontier Days where all sorts of cowboy demonstrations were in order. On the last day before the race it happened. Yep, me and the gun again. Now guns could be carried out West, but not inside the town limits. I didn't know it. Greenhorn again.

Back to my very good friend (phooey) Van Loan. Now Van was quite a wag, and his ideas of humor often were most crude. You fellows years ago must have read his great baseball stories in the Sat. Eve. Post and those in N. Y. in the American. Anyway Van thought it a splendid time to exhibit his humorous powers on yours truly. I carried that durn 38 Iver Johnson that had got me into such a jam on the auto race, and Van knew I had it. So the

bright boy tipped off the Sheriff and between them they fixed me plenty.

I wandered into one of those gambling joints, the kind you see in the movies, looking for some interesting shots for my paper and as I was about to take a flash shot, I was quickly frisked by this Sheriff and finding the offending bit of hardware, off to the pokey, the hoosegow, just plain jail to you.

What a night, me behind bars with another prisoner, in for what I don't remember. I asked the keeper to send a note to Van. Oh sure he did, but the Sheriff and Van were enjoying a bottle of red eye between em, and ta hell with Charlie. The next day the race was to start and me out of circulation.

All this time I did not know it was just a gag, but when I did find it out, my sense of humor was quite upset. I didn't sleep a wink all night, mabe one, no more, but was on the spot in time to get the start, Van saw to that—good old Van, now long since under the daisies. And today somehow I forgive him.

Well in the early morning light 25 horses dashed over the starting line amid a cloud of dust. It must have been because there were no paved roads in those days.

When we left it was of course in a hired pilot car from which the reporters followed the progress of the horses, and I made many photos from the pilot car. It did get tiresome watching the poor animals pushed to their last ounce of endurance. The Cody Hawss with Charles Workman from Cody, Wyo., took the lead, followed closely by F. T. Wyckert, from Severance, Wyo., on a horse named Sam. Workman's horse was named Teddy. I had forgotten that, but the Denver Library supplied that, Gawd bless em.

At 2:30 p.m. six days later two horses, Teddy and Sam came neck and neck into Denver with an audience of 20,000 to see the finish. I was there ahead of em in the pilot car to get the big doings. The paper next day was just filled with pictures, and it meant my finishing everything before it went to press. How I wish I had saved those papers and look over those items. I covered so many events out there in the West, but little did I realize that some day I would want to see the stuff. If ever I get the time will surely go out there and look into the old papers. The Post to whom I had written for information told me their files were open, all the papers were available, but they did not have the time nor facilities to give me the information wanted. So mabe, some day I'll go out there, look up the old stuff and revel in what was.

Oh yes, I near forgot to mention, that only six horses shared in the prizes, four came in hours after Workman and Wyckert. What held back many and stopped the horses was the alkali which is so prevalent on the prairies. Horses would stop to drink water and if it contained alkali they would get blind staggers. We always had our faces well smeared with grease else the skin would dry up and crack. Yes those were the days me lads.

Don Learnard, H. H. B. Member #19, finally rounded up Liberty Boys of 76 No. 265 for which he had been hunting for seven years and offered \$5.00 for, in good shape. He did not know the number, but as he remembered it he described the picture on the front cover. A country road with a cabin or farmhouse in the background. Raining hard. A British officer, mounted, comes galloping down

the road on Dick Slater's horse and Dick leaps up, deals him a blow and knocks him off. Bob Estabrook, Dick's pal, was also there but Don had forgotten about him as it was about forty-five years ago that he read the book as a kid.

Strange that none of the readers of the Roundup could identify the copy, from Don's description, which was fairly close.

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Just received word from J. Edward Leithead that John T. McIntyre, 214 So. 42nd St., Phila. 4, Pa., H. H. Bro. Member #33 died, May 21st, 1951. Poor John never really recovered from his operation a few years ago. He was a great writer, having written many books, such as *The Young Continentals*, *Young Man's Fancy*, *Shot Towers*, *Slag*, *Stained Sails*, *Drums in the Dawn*, *Ferment*, *Signing Off*, *Steps Going Down* and others, also a number of plays. *Steps Going Down*, published in 1936, he considered his best work, and was a winner in the \$19,000 All-Nations prize Novel Competition sponsored by the Literary Guild, Farrar and Rinehart and Warner Brothers. Its locale was the general vicinity of 3rd and Vine Streets in Phila. Many times I've wondered how John enjoyed his rare collection of novels and story papers, as he kept them in storage, but who knows, maybe he saw them more than we think. May his soul rest in peace, always.

There is a fine article on the "Brown Brothers," in the "News from Home Mag," Spring 1951 issue, with lots of pictures in New York, also of one of our members, Charles Duprez, in the old days with a camera, waiting for a chance to snap the pictures of the principals in the Thaw trial. Charlie is in the class when they wore the famous Derby hats at the turn of the century.

Who knows anything of the whereabouts of L. Ervin Wright, Russellville, Ark.? He sold complete sets of novels of all kinds way back in 1915, such as Nick Carter, Tip Top, Frank Reades, and what not at \$3.75 per 100. Those were the days.

John R. Musick wrote all the James Boys stories signed by D. W. Stevens.

March 1866—Godeys Lady Book—had a note in it that Chicago's first juvenile book, Luke Darrell, the Chicago Newsboy is the first child's book printed in Chicago, and it will be well for the great Western Emporium

if its future publications are as good as their sort, from Tomlinson Brothers, Chicago, Ill. It is written by some one who has had to do with Newsboys, and understands something of their life and habits.

Ernest Beique sent in a clipping from the Worcester Sunday Telegram 12-24-50 of the oldest man in New England, was a boy Indian captive, died at 111 years old up in Houlton, Maine.

Parcel post rates will advance Oct. 1st, on an average of 25 per cent. Looks as if we collectors who do a lot of package mailings are going to be up against it, unless something can be done?

Ed Leithead says he's been receiving some nice comments on his circus stories article in April Roundup, among them a letter from Henry Ringling North, brother of John Ringling North, head of Ringling Brothers and Baraam & Bailey Combined Shows, Inc.

Pete Martin, Sat. Eve. Post, Phila. 5, Pa., H. H. Bro. member #206 is a dyed in the wool, Henty Collector.

George H. Hess, Jr., says Scotch tape is the ruination of all novels, and that collectors should never use it.

I am well acquainted with the General Sales Manager of the Minnesota Mining & Mfg. Company, which company manufactures scotch tape, and talked to him about this matter. I have noted the same difficulty with the old scotch cellophane tape that was used to repair novels in bygone days and the resulting tearing that occurs when you look through the book. The Sales Manager of the Tape Division of the Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Company wrote a memorandum to the General Sales Manager of the company in part as follows:

"Our regular #600 Transparent Cellophane that is used in our line of resale tapes is recommended only for temporary usage because cellophane, over a period of time, will shrink and thus leave exposed a small area of adhesive along the edge of the tape. #800 Acetate Film Tape has excel-

lent aging properties and would be ideal for such a use as repairing Dime Novels where they are being kept for a long period of time. This Acetate Film Tape comes only in 2592" rolls and could be purchased from stationery stores or paper jobbers. We have not seen fit to put this up in a resale roll because of the limited market due to its lower tensile strength as compared to cellophane tape."

I am now using the acetate film tape and find it very satisfactory in repairing my nickel and dime novels, and I suggest that you put something in a future issue of The Round-Up explaining this matter, as I believe if this acetate film tape cannot be procured at any local store wherever it may be asked for, that letters should be written to the Sales Department, Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Co., St. Paul, Minnesota, asking for the name of the dealer in the vicinity where inquiry was made for the tape as to who handles it there.

Edward LeBlanc, 36 Taylor St., Fall River, Mass., wants to know where he can get a copy of Yankee 5¢ Library, or the Hub Novels with "Jocko Kelly Trapped," in it. Says he will buy or get the loan of it if he can, as he needs the information in it on the fine article he is writing up for the Roundup.

A Banquet Reception was given in honor of our Great Sachem (Improved Order of Redmen) Frank E. Henry, H. H. Bro. Member #134, at Putnam and Thurstones on May 26th, 1951 Worcester, Mass. Many of our readers attended. There were 170 there. Thomas Funderberk flew up from Arlington, Va., to attend.

Mrs. Gannett died May 22nd 1951. She was the wife of the late Wm. Gannett, big Augusta, Maine, publisher of Comfort and other mail order publications around the turn of the century.

Harry St. Clair, 643 St. Joseph St., Baton Rouge, La., has been very sick, but is coming along very good just now.

John R. Smith, 63 Wilson Ave., Lynbrook, L. I., N. Y., and a dear

friend of his, William T. Watson were up to see ye editor Cummings, Sat. May 26th, 1951. We had a fine time all around. This was their first visit, and sure hope there will be lots more.

John Clark of Bridgeport, Conn., reports that there was a fine article on Wild Bill, and Calamity Jane, with pictures and all. Title—"Packsaddle" Ben's Interesting Letters," in April 1951 issue of Pony Express Courier. Vol. 17, No. 11.

REVERIE,

HOME ON THE RANGE

as communicated by JHA HHB #95
to GFO HHB #10

In JHA's letter he mentioned how times have changed since he was out West in the wide open spaces, care-free and happy, no clocks to watch for fear of being late to work. No radio war news or accident reports. No subway or "L" trains to catch, no automobiles to dodge. No late breakfast (you had your own when it suited you.) No shaving troubles. No bath except in nearby river. No laundry bill (you did your own in the river). No letters to write. No mail man to look for. No city rackets or noise (just listen to the birds, bees and grasshoppers). No money in your pocket—no place to spend it. No umbrellas, if you crossed a river on horse-back, let the horse swim, and let your legs hang down into the water—let your clothes dry as you went along. Nothing wanted, nothing offered to you. Nothing missed or craved for. Meals were always sure if you prepared them yourself, usually sour belly and beans. No company except horse and dog and field mice even at table when you ate. Home, a sod house, weeds growing on roof, no floor, just Mother Nature earth.

No doubt many readers, especially the old timers have experienced such as depicted above. JHA #95 makes no mention of reading any dime novels on the range, but I feel sure that many of the old timers read dime

novels up in the hay loft or some of quiet environment that JHA #95
quiet nook in the barn, just the sort had back so many years ago.

RECENT RENEWALS TO THE ROUND-UP

48. W. E. Bennett, 2305 Indiana Ave., Rear, Kansas City 1, Mo.
83. A. Willard Jaffray, Belvidere, Ill.
89. Earle Barr Hanson, 812 S. W. First St., Miami 36, Fla.
93. Victor L. Neighbors, 304 N. State St., Litchfield, Ill.
102. Samuel Olnhausen, 824 Chester Ave., East Liverpool, Ohio.
139. Ted McDonald, 6006 Fountain Ave., Hollywood 28, Calif.
177. William G. Lee, 4406 W. Washington Blvd., Chicago 24, Ill.
191. John P. Wendt, Crown Point, Ind.
211. Walter E. Brown, 511 Ninth St., Altoona, Pa. (New)

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756 787 778 776 774 769 767 765 764
791 750 758 788 784 781 780 779 778
777 772 770 769 768 767 762 793 794
at 10¢ each, or all 34 for \$3.00.

Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass

WANTED

25¢ Novelette Library No. 101. The
Venetian Buccaneer, #131. White
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